

Testimony in Favor of Senior Tax Freeze

By

David H. Wordell, Salem Senior

To: Senator Edith Prague, Co-Chair
Representative Joseph Serra, Co-Chair
Members of the Aging Committee

For the record, my name is David H. Wordell, a senior citizen from the town of Salem and I am here to testify in support of an act enabling the towns of Connecticut to increase eligibility for the property tax freeze program for seniors who make under \$75,000.

Most senior citizens today live on fixed incomes and are facing difficult choices due to huge increases in costs of utilities, heating fuel, gasoline and especially town taxes. There is a mass and permanent exodus to the southern states not just for the warm climate but mainly for the reduction in their taxes. One such case is a former town resident who left Salem two years ago. He was paying \$4,000.00 in town taxes and was forced to relocate in Florida where he is now paying \$400.00.

My wife and I have been retired for over 10 years. We are both professional people and fortunately retired with small pensions. We consider ourselves to be a middle income family and are above the very low circuit breaker limits for relief. We are not looking for relief, but simply to freeze our existing level of taxes, so if we live for another 15 years we can still afford to stay in our home where we have lived for nearly 50 years. I have lived my life responsibly, restoring my colonial home, re-building stone walls, establishing open spaces and restoring an old cemetery where my wife and I expect to be buried. One year ago, after a five year re-evaluation, with no recent changes to our property, our taxes went up nearly \$3,000.00 in one year, all based on my house value, while home values actually decreased. We fortunately were able to survive this crisis, but are very concerned that we will be forced to sell the homestead where we want to spend the rest of our lives.

Senior citizens have a lot to offer their towns and the State. As a former teacher, I still volunteer on committees and occasionally teach about the Pony Express. Towns should strive to keep their senior citizens, they are a valuable resource.